Ekaterina Kovalenko, 10.01.03 (English Literature)

My Research

The First World War was truly horrifying experience for all humanity. And since wars are still a sensitive matter all over the globe, the interest in it hasn’t faded even though it took place more than a century ago. Pat Barker’s novel “Regeneration” is one of the shining examples of the literary works aimed at analysing and reassessing the dramatic events.

My research is “The Poetics of Pat Barker's novel ‘Regeneration’” and it aims to pinpoint the specific nature of Pat Barker’s novel and analyse its features from different perspectives. My scientific supervisor is Popova-Bondarenko Irina Anatolyevna, an associate professor of Foreign Literature Department. She profoundly influenced my perception of the task demanding cultural insights of universal significance. Tatyana Georgievna Telichko, who is also an associate professor of the same department, advised me to choose Pat Barker’s “Regeneration” as a literary work conflating postmodern perception of the world with highly accurate description of real historical events.

First and foremost the novel should be considered as an example of postmodern literature intricately interweaving fact and fiction. Moreover it clearly raises the question about its suggested genre: it is still to be specified whether it is a historical fiction or a historiographic metafiction (following the term of Linda Hutcheon), whether it should be assigned to a war novels or an anti-war novels, whether it turns out to be a clear

example of postmodern writing or it has more in common with the traditional narrative. These questions constitute the subject of the research, whereas Pat Barker's novel "Regeneration" is its object.

It has been found that the special feature of the novel is that the military context is presented in it in the medical language professionally familiar to Dr. W. H. R. Rivers. The medical layer not only describes the consequences of military operations, the treatment of combat injuries, war neuroses and shell shock, but also provides the European atmosphere of that time. Medical violence becomes a metaphor for military violence against humanity: a person is not born to cause suffering to another, but war legitimizes this unnatural and unrighteous state of being.

This idea is highlighted with Dr. River's inner conflict. As a doctor, he has to take care of his patients, but as a military doctor, he is obliged to send them back to the inhumane front-line conditions that have already broken them. This conflict reflects a gap in the public perception of soldiers. On the one hand, in an established system of values dating back to the Victorian era, they were perceived as exceptionally courageous and driven by duty. On the other hand, they are now perceived as victims of war, experiencing various emotions, including fear and shock, but back to the beginning of XX century showing this type of emotions would put them to the risk. The soldiers risked their masculinity as all the emotions and mental diseases were identified as "feminine" and "weak".

In conclusion, it is evident that the content layer in Pat Barker's "Regeneration" that is closely related to the military narrative is often replaced by a medical layer (electric shock, pain, fear, etc.). It means that it brings the traumatic experience

of the First World War to the metaphysical level of rejection of any war as violence against a person.